

State of New Mexico
LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

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December 17, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: Eilani Gerstner 

RE: WRITTEN REPORT: STUDY SCHOOL STAFF SHORTAGE ISSUES, HJM 3

Endorsed by the Legislative Education Study Committee, House Joint Memorial 3 (2008) (HJM 3), *Study School Staff Shortage Issues* (Attachment 1), requests the Public Education Department (PED) and the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) in the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) to examine issues related to turnover and emergencies resulting from predicted shortages of school counselors, nurses, and other professional instructional support personnel in public school districts and charter schools. The memorial requests PED and OEA to report their findings and recommendations to the LESC prior to the first session of the forty-ninth Legislature.

Findings and Recommendations

As summarized below, the report (Attachment 2) outlines the functions that counselors and nurses serve in the public schools; compares New Mexico's student-to-counselor and student-to-nurse ratios with national standards; and recommends forming a joint task force to conduct further study.

Counselors

The report cites the many functions of school counselors, which range from providing academic and career guidance to providing individual and group counseling in response to crisis situations.

According to the report, the counselor-to-student ratio in New Mexico and average ages of New Mexico counselors indicate a shortage of school counselors in the state:

- In school year 2004-2005, New Mexico's student-to-counselor ratio in grades K-8 was 775 students to each counselor. However, according to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the recommended student-to-counselor ratio is 250 students to one counselor, three times as many counselors as are currently available in New Mexico public schools (the report does not indicate if this recommendation is for particular grade levels or for all grade levels).
- While no state meets the ASCA recommendations, in school year 2004-2005 the national average was 479 students to one counselor in grades K-12.
- According to PED's student teacher accountability reporting system (STARS), the average ages of New Mexico's counselors range from 49 to 58 years old, indicating a possible shortage in the near future.

Nurses

The report also cites the duties of school nurses, including caring for students with serious medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, and behavioral health issues, and notes that, according to PED, 25 percent of students in New Mexico public schools require daily medical procedures.

According to the report, the student-to-nurse ratio in New Mexico and average age of nurses nationwide appear to indicate a nursing shortage:

- In school year 2005-2006, PED reports, New Mexico's average student-to-nurse ratio was 830 students to one nurse. However, the National Association of School Nurses and the US Department of Health and Human Services recommends 750 regular students per nurse. (The report does not specify to which grade levels these ratios apply.)
- More nurses are recommended for students with special needs:
 - one nurse for every 225 mainstreamed special education students, and
 - one nurse for every 125 students with complex health care needs or developmental disabilities.
- According to the PED and OEA report, nationally, the average age of registered nurses in March 2004 was 46.8 years, and the Health Resources and Services Administration projects that the nation will have a shortage of over one million nurses by 2020.

Recommendation

The report recommends the creation of a joint task force comprising representatives from PED and the boards of both the New Mexico School Counselors Association and the New Mexico School Nurses Association. This task force would conduct the following activities:

- review the alignment between New Mexico's content standards, benchmarks, and performance standards for counselors and nurses and those of the American School Counselor Association and the National Association of School Nurses and recommend any changes to New Mexico's content standards, benchmarks, and performance standards;
- review the career pathway system requirements for New Mexico counselors and nurses and propose three levels of licensure, mastery, and accountability: Level I – Beginning, Level II – Advanced, and Level III – Master or Supervisory;
- address the need for PED oversight of the school counseling programs in New Mexico;
- work on a systematic plan to reduce student-to-counselor and student-to-nurse ratios; and
- review (1) a possible three-tiered licensure process for determining salaries, and (2) how the proposed public school funding formula will categorize school counselors and nurses.

Background

During the 2007 interim, the LESC heard a presentation in response to a 2007 memorial that requested the LESC, DFA, and PED, with input from the various instructional support provider associations, to study the cost of providing a three-tiered salary structure for all instructional support providers and to report the results to the LESC and to the Legislative Finance Committee.

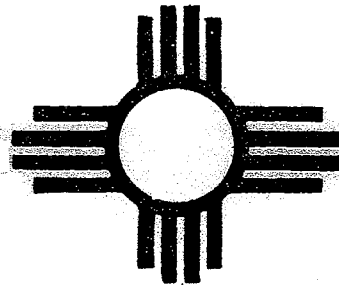
The results of the report showed that the cost of implementation in FY 09 would have been approximately \$3.2 million for FY 09 if no additional salary increase were provided. With a 2.0 percent salary increase, the estimated cost would have dropped to approximately \$2.8 million in FY 09.

During the presentation, several committee members expressed concern regarding the high turnover rates for school nurses and shortages of school counselors in New Mexico and the emergencies that arise as a result.

The presentation also reviewed the background of the three-tiered licensure and salary system for teachers and past efforts to implement a similar system for instructional assistants:

- In 2003, LESC-endorsed public school reform legislation was enacted. The resulting provisions in law include a professional licensure system (three-tiered licensure) for teachers based on competencies rather than on longevity and the accumulation of academic credit hours. As a part of the three-tiered licensure system, minimum salaries for teachers were established in law.

- Current statute directs PED to license instructional support providers, including school counselors and nurses, and further provides that PED “may provide a professional licensure framework in which licensees can advance in their careers through the demonstration of increased competencies and the undertaking of increased duties.” However, the provisions do not include minimum salaries for these personnel.
- Legislation was introduced in the 2005, 2006, and 2007 legislative sessions that would have required PED to provide “a progressive licensing framework” for instructional support providers and would have established both a highly objective system of performance evaluation and the following minimum salaries for those professional instructional support providers whose duties require a bachelor’s or higher degree: \$30,000 minimum for Level 1; \$40,000 for Level 2; and \$50,000 for Level 3. However, the legislation did not pass.



The Legislature
of the
State of New Mexico

48th Legislature, 2nd Session

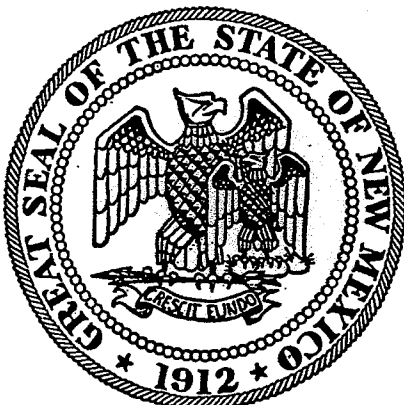
LAWS 2008

CHAPTER _____

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 3

Introduced by

REPRESENTATIVE NATHAN P. COTE



FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY
COMMITTEE

1 A JOINT MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE OFFICE OF
3 EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY TO EXAMINE ISSUES RELATED TO
4 TURNOVER AND EMERGENCIES RESULTING FROM PREDICTED SHORTAGES
5 OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS, NURSES AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL
6 INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL IN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS
7 AND CHARTER SCHOOLS.
8

9 WHEREAS, school counselors, nurses and other
10 professional instructional support personnel are essential to
11 children's learning in New Mexico schools; and

12 WHEREAS, New Mexico schools must recruit and retain
13 qualified school counselors, nurses and other professional
14 instructional support personnel to cope more adequately with
15 the demands of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, school counselors play a critical role in
18 helping students focus on academic, personal, social and
19 career development, particularly through the next-step
20 planning process, so that students may achieve success in
21 school and be prepared to lead fulfilling lives as
22 responsible members of society; and

23 WHEREAS, nationally, forty-six percent of the nursing
24 workforce is over fifty years of age; and

25 WHEREAS, the federal health resources and services

1 administration predicts that New Mexico will be able to meet
2 only sixty-four percent of the state's demand for nurses in
3 all capacities by 2020; and

4 WHEREAS, school counselors, nurses and other
5 professional instructional support personnel in New Mexico
6 school districts currently average more than fourteen years
7 of experience; and

8 WHEREAS, school districts have a difficult time
9 attracting and retaining qualified school counselors, nurses
10 and other professional instructional support personnel due to
11 competition for their services from the private sector; and

12 WHEREAS, many school counselors, nurses and other
13 professional instructional support personnel can choose
14 employment in a variety of settings other than public
15 schools, such as hospitals, pediatric clinics, rehabilitation
16 facilities, mental health centers and nursing homes;

17 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
18 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the public education department and
19 the office of education accountability be requested to
20 examine issues related to turnover and emergencies resulting
21 from predicted shortages of school counselors, nurses and
22 other professional instructional support personnel in public
23 school districts and charter schools; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department and the
25 office report their findings and recommendations, if any, to

1 the legislative education study committee prior to the first
2 session of the forty-ninth legislature; and

3 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
4 transmitted to the secretary of public education, the
5 director of the office of education accountability and the
6 secretary of finance and administration.

S/ BEN LUJAN
BEN LUJAN, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

S/ STEPHEN R. ARIAS
STEPHEN R. ARIAS, CHIEF CLERK
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

S/ DIANE D. DENISH
DIANE D. DENISH, PRESIDENT
SENATE

S/ LENORE M. NARANJO
LENORE M. NARANJO, CHIEF CLERK
SENATE

House Joint Memorial 3

(HJM 3)

RECEIVED
VIA E-MAIL

DEC 11 2008

A Report of Findings

For

The New Mexico

Legislative Education Study Committee

December 17–19, 2008

Prepared By

The New Mexico Public Education Department

Rolletta Sue Gronewold, Deputy Director, Special Education Bureau

Georgia M. Glasgow, Medicaid School Based Services Coordinator/School Nurse
Consultant, School and Family Support Bureau

And

The Office of Education Accountability

New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration

Dr. Peter Winograd, Director

Richard LaPan, Senior Policy Analyst

Report of Findings on House Joint Memorial 3 (HJM 3)

REQUIREMENTS

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) and the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) are requested by HJM 3 to examine issues related to turnover and emergencies resulting from predicted shortages of school counselors, nurses and other instructional support personnel in public school districts and charter schools. The results of the study are summarized in this written report to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC).

BACKGROUND

The New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) 6.30.2C requires that School Health Programs provide opportunities for all students to develop healthy behaviors. The school districts must provide for school health programs that address the health needs of students and staff. Required programs include health education, physical education, health services and school counseling. Other programs may include nutrition, staff wellness, and family-school-community partnerships. Nurses and counselors are not mentioned specifically in the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC).

PED indicates that “instructional support personnel” are defined in the Public School Code as persons who are employed to support the instructional program of a school district, including education assistant, school counselor, social worker, school nurse and others.”

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the ratio of school counselors to students should be 250 students to 1 counselor. At this time, no state meets this goal and the national average is 479 students to 1 counselor (2004-05) in grades K-12. In New Mexico (2004-2005) in grades K through 8 the student-to-school counselor rate was 775 to 1 which is inadequate to address the needs of those students.

The average ages of the state's school counselors range from approximately 49 to 58 years of age (STARS). There is no mention of a shortage or potential shortage of counselors however, given the age of many counselors, there may be a shortage due to attrition in the near future. The average salary ranges from \$28,754 to \$55,815 (STARS).

In New Mexico, School Counselors are required to have a minimum of a Master's degree in counseling, psychology or related field, and must obtain a PED license to practice in the schools.

School counselors provide comprehensive guidance and counseling in schools by teaching pertinent curricula in the classrooms, providing academic guidance to students and parents, assisting students toward graduation and then college entrance, consulting with teachers and staff to facilitate academic and personal success for each student, and working with staff and community to help integrate the counseling program within the total school program. Counselors are responsible for individual interventions for students at risk for failing, dropping out, or personal crisis.

Career guidance and counseling is another vital element in the comprehensive counseling program for all students. Counselors also provide individual and group counseling for all students as needed for critical crisis situations as well as ongoing issues, like ADD, grief, social skills, study skills, and other concerns.

New Mexico has critical issues, including significant dropout rates, suicide, drug use, gangs and violence in communities, teen pregnancy, and poverty. Most students experience depression, anxiety, and personal crises at some point in their 13 years in school. School counselors are uniquely trained and qualified to deal with these challenging problems in the academic as well as personal/social areas of concern. New Mexico students and their families deserve counseling services to help ensure their mental health and wellness and academic success.

SCHOOL NURSES

According to the National Association of School Nurses and the Department of Health & Human Services, the recommendation is for a student-to-school nurse ratio of 750 to 1 for regular

students, 225 to 1 for mainstreamed special education students and 125 to 1 for complex health care needs or developmentally disabled students. The 2005-2006 PED Annual School Health Services Report states that New Mexico is currently averaging a student-to-school nurse ratio of 830 to 1. The Healthy People 2010 goal states that districts should employ at least 1 school nurse per 750 students (AAP Policy Statement May 2008).

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Fact Sheet, the United States is in the midst of a nursing shortage that is expected to intensify as baby boomers age and the need for health care grows. In April of 2006, officials with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) released projections that the nation's nursing shortage would grow to more than one million nurses by the year 2020. The average age of the Registered Nurse (RN) population in March 2004 was 46.8 years of age. Some of the factors that impact the nursing shortage are a decrease in entry – level baccalaureate programs in nursing in 2006. Job burnout and dissatisfaction are driving nurses to leave the profession. In the school setting, there are many students who are medically fragile and require intense nursing care. The numbers of these students are increasing and the need for more nurses is subsequently increasing also.

Many schools have students with serious medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, epilepsy behavioral health issues and other health conditions that can be extremely serious and may require treatment during the school day. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the students in NM public schools in 2005-2006 had a medical condition according to the PED Annual School Health Services Report with 8,587 requiring daily medical procedures in order to access their education. School nurses positively impact absenteeism and time spent out of class due to health conditions ("Impact of School Nursing on School Performance", *Journal of School Nursing*, June 2003). School nurses also impact chronic disease management and helping students better manage their conditions to decrease time away from school and class.

It is important that the school staff is educated regarding the health conditions of students in the school. In order to address the health issues of the students, it is essential to have a school nurse and a counselor in the building or easily accessible to prevent life threatening consequences that may occur without medical or other intervention.

Stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol use, violence and teen pregnancy are at an all time high in New Mexico and are best addressed by school nurses and school counselors. Many psychological problems are first presented as physical complaints seen by the school nurse. School nurses and school counselors work in collaboration to provide the care student's need.

On a positive note, The New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS) 2005 indicates that New Mexico Students are improving their nutrition, participating in more physical activity, decreasing use of cigarettes and lower rates of cocaine and methamphetamine use. New Mexico has low rates of obesity and overweight.

SUMMARY

This report represents the consensus findings of educational leaders, including staff from state agencies and others who participated in meetings held from April to November 2008. The recommendations in this report support the Legislature's work to improve the New Mexico public education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Form a joint task force to review the American School Counselor Association's Counseling Standards and Competencies and the National Association of School Nurses Standards and Competencies and makes recommendations for adding standards and competencies to align with the New Mexico Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards for school counselors and nurses.

The task force will include members of the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) and select members of the executive boards of the New Mexico School Counselors Association (NMSCA) and the New Mexico School Nurses Association (NMSNA).

- The task force will review the Career Pathway System Requirements for New Mexico School Counselors and School Nurses. The three proposed levels of PED licensure, mastery and accountability are:
 - Level I (Beginning);
 - Level II (Advanced); and
 - Level III (Master or Supervisory)
- The task force will address the need for PED oversight of the school counseling programs in New Mexico to assure consistent accountability.
- The task force will work on a systematic plan to lower the student-to-school counselor and student-to-school nurse ratios from the present K-8 ratios in New Mexico.
- The task force will review the three tier licensure process for determining salaries and the proposed new Public School Funding Formula categorization of educational professionals, especially school counselors and nurses.

APPENDIX A

NEW MEXICO SCHOOL COUNSELOR AND SCHOOL NURSES DATA

SCHOOL COUNSELORS: 2007-2008 (120th day data)					
Category	N	License Level	Average Age	Average Salary	Average Years of Experience
Counseling Coordinator	0	1			
	0	2			
	6	3	47	\$46,633	13
Drug/Alcohol Abuse Coordinator	0	1			
	0	2			
	0	3			
	25	NA	47	\$44,661	10
Elementary	45	1	43	\$34,182	6
	98	2	50	\$48,086	13
	243	3	53	\$52,497	19
Junior/Mid High	20	1	45	\$39,643	8
	45	2	47	\$47,590	12
	130	3	54	\$55,505	20
	1	NA	56	\$51,366	22
Secondary	35	1	44	\$44,868	9
	82	2	48	\$48,499	11
	213	3	53	\$55,815	20
	1	NA	58	\$28,754	25

NA = Not Applicable

SCHOOL NURSES: 2007-2008 (120th day data)					
Category	N	License Level	Average Age	Average Salary	Average Years of Experience
LPN	13	1	49	\$31,649	11
LPN	13	2	47	\$38,458	15
RN	104	1	46	\$39,590	7
RN	324	2	52	\$42,775	16
RN	19	3	57	\$52,964	25
RN	6	NA	45	\$24,843	7

APPENDIX B

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 3

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY TO EXAMINE ISSUES RELATED TO TURNOVER AND EMERGENCIES RESULTING FROM PREDICTED SHORTAGES OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS, NURSES AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL IN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS.

WHEREAS, school counselors, nurses and other professional instructional support personnel are essential to children's learning in New Mexico schools; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico schools must recruit and retain qualified school counselors, nurses and other professional instructional support personnel to cope more adequately with the demands of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; and

WHEREAS, school counselors play a critical role in helping students focus on academic, personal, social and career development, particularly through the next-step planning process, so that students may achieve success in school and be prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society; and

WHEREAS, nationally, forty-six percent of the nursing workforce is over fifty years of age; and

WHEREAS, the federal health resources and services administration predicts that New Mexico will be able to meet only sixty-four percent of the state's demand for nurses in all capacities by 2020; and

WHEREAS, school counselors, nurses and other professional instructional support personnel in New Mexico school districts currently average more than fourteen years of experience; and

WHEREAS, school districts have a difficult time attracting and retaining qualified school counselors, nurses and other professional instructional support personnel due to competition for their services from the private sector; and

WHEREAS, many school counselors, nurses and other professional instructional support personnel can choose employment in a variety of settings other than public schools, such as hospitals, pediatric clinics, rehabilitation facilities, mental health centers and nursing homes;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the public education department and the office of education accountability be requested to examine issues related to turnover and emergencies resulting from predicted shortages of school counselors, nurses and other professional instructional support personnel in public school districts and charter schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department and the office report their findings and recommendations, if any, to the legislative education study committee prior to the first session of the forty-ninth legislature; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of public education, the director of the office of education accountability and the secretary of finance and administration.

APPENDIX C

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

APRIL 14, 2008

School and Family Support Bureau
NM Public Education Department
Federal Building - Large Conference Room
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

MAY 28, 2008

Office of Education Accountability
NM Department of Finance and Administration
402 Don Gaspar Avenue
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

AUGUST 5, 2008

Office of Education Accountability
NM Department of Finance and Administration
402 Don Gaspar Avenue
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

NOVEMBER 4, 2008

Office of Education Accountability
NM Department of Finance and Administration
402 Don Gaspar Avenue
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

APPENDIX D

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Cheri Dotson, Lead Nurse, Santa Fe Public Schools and New Mexico School Nurses Association

Eilani Gerstner, Research Analyst, New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee

Georgia M. Glasgow, Medicaid School Based Services Coordinator/School Nurse Consultant, School and Family Support Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department

Rolletta Sue Gronewold, Deputy Director, Special Education Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department

Maria Jaramillo, Program and Related Services Coordinator, Central Region Educational Cooperative

Richard LaPan, Senior Policy Analyst, Office of Education Accountability, New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration

Kris Meurer, Director, School and Family Support Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department

Richard M. Romero, Lobbyist for the New Mexico Speech-Language Hearing Association

Joanie Roybal, Education Administrator, Special Education Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department

Linda Siegle, Lobbyist for the New Mexico School Nurses Association and the New Mexico Occupational Therapists Association

Betty Whiton, School Counselor at Hubert Humphrey Elementary School, Albuquerque Public Schools and Legislative Liaison for the New Mexico School Counselors Association

Peter Winograd, Director, Office of Education Accountability, New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration